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SUBJECT: DAS GORDON GRAY MEETING WITH SHEIKH HAMAD BIN JASSIM AL-THANI (HBJ) - DOHA, QATAR, 1 DECEMBER 2005

Classified By: Ambassador Chase Untermeyer, Reasons 1.4 (B and D)

1. (U) Present on the Qatari side: Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani (HBJ), Foreign Minister and First Deputy Prime Minister of Qatar; Sheikh Jabor bin Yusuf al-Thani, HBJ,s Office Director and nephew; Sheikha Mayassa bint Hamad al-Thani, daughter of the Amir of Qatar and newly-appointed Assistant to HBJ for International Conferences; and Khalifa al-Sowaidi, Staff Assistant, European & Americas Division, MFA.

2. (U) Present on the US side: Gordon Gray, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs; Ambassador Chase

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Untermeyer; Shawn Thorne, Qatar-UAE Desk Officer, State Department; Mirembé Nantongo, Public Affairs Officer, Embassy Doha; and Rob Pyott, Political-Economics Officer, Embassy Doha.

3. (U) The meeting took place at approximately noon on Thursday, 1 December 2005, in the Four Seasons Hotel Doha (owned by HBJ).

4. (S) The Qatari-American Relationship: Mr. Gray began by saying the US "very much appreciates your hosting (our forces) at Al Udeid. Overall, the relationship is very strong." He then asked HBJ for his view of the relationship.

"Yes, it is a good relationship," he said, but not like before. We had more understanding; we would talk very often; we would share views; and we would know what was going on. Right now, I feel we don't have that close a relationship, one that allows you to say what you want. I couldn't find up to now that your side is ready to do that (again). We are waiting till you decide it is the right time.

"I had a good visit with the Secretary (in September). It was not enough time.... We would like to engage more in a serious and longer talk with the right people. I did not succeed. We'll leave it till I see some progress in the relationship."

5. (S) Al Jazeera: With regard to the 22 November report in the London Daily Mirror that President Bush in April 2004 spoke of attacking Al Jazeera,s studios in Doha, HBJ said: "I thought someone from the White House would deny it and speak about the relationship. They just said it was a silly thing. This (country) is not Russia or China: You have a base here and friends here. Even if it was not true, something needed to be said from the White House. It is an emotional thing for our people, and we have to be concerned. They ask, Why do you want a relationship with these people when they want to bomb Al Jazeera and kill maybe 500 people from many countries?,

"We became tired talking about Al Jazeera. We are trying to make progress. I understand your fear, your anxiety. Every time, we have a new demand, especially after we learn you wanted to bomb it.... We didn't say anything. I heard for a year and a half that the story was true."

Mr. Gray replied, "The White House was categorical in dismissing the story. Prime Minister Blair did the same. It,s hard when something is not true to prove it,s not. I agree we missed a chance to say something positive about the Qatari-American relationship, but there was a desire to keep the statement to a minimum. I realize you have your audience, and the people of Qatar want more elaboration....There was no bombing. We obviously have our differences with Al Jazeera. At the same time, members of our administration appear on Al Jazeera all the time. I have confidence in both of you (HBJ and Ambassador Untermeyer). Al Jazeera is becoming more professional. Unfortunately, recently it,s gone in the opposite direction."

HBJ said, "I,m not just talking about Al Jazeera, I don,t care about it. I care about straightening our relationship. I would like the (Bush) Administration to think how to make this relationship work. You have a good man here (Ambassador Untermeyer) working on it. But every time we agree on something, there is something new."

HBJ said that he met with Karen Hughes, and she promised to

get back in touch with Ambassador al-Khalifa there but has not yet done so. Mr. Gray promised to "take that back to Washington."

16. (S) Iran: Mr. Gray asked HBJ for his views on Iran, and HBJ replied: "We think all parties in Iran want a nuclear weapon, and they will have it. I think the Iranians have a clear message from the Russians that a resolution in the Security Council (condemning Iran) won't go anywhere. I told the Secretary-General of NATO (today) that it should speak with one voice. The Iranians will talk and talk to you till one day we will wake up and they have a nuclear weapon." Mr. Gray agreed.

HBJ continued: "It will be a big problem for us if (the Iranians) have a leakage like Chernobyl. The same day it will be in Doha. The Iranians always have their way to sneak around. We have said this before: The fear is from Iran, not Iraq. We shouldn't hope some crack will happen inside Iran. Right now they have the devil, America. The mullahs have the upper hand and all the most important elements of the country. We are not happy; we are not relaxed."

When Mr. Gray asked HBJ what the US should do, the FM replied: "There is no other way than the EU3 approach. But you need to limit it say, February and then go to the Security Council. You have the means to convince the Russians not to veto."

17. (S) Palestine: Mr. Gray reminded HBJ of his pledge to Assistant Secretary Welch in New York in September that Qatar will support Palestine financially. HBJ said Qatar has sent the Palestinians 100 "military cars". Qatar is also looking at some sort of bank and a rail link between Gaza and the West Bank. He said he will go to Gaza in January, at which time "I will announce something."

Asked about elections in Palestine, HBJ said, "We shouldn't exclude Hamas. It makes Hamas look like the real Palestinians. To isolate them is to repeat mistakes made in many places. I talk to Abu Mazen many times on the phone. He is optimistic."

18. (S) Iraq: Mr. Gray asked HBJ if he seen the President's speech in Annapolis, and HBJ said he had: "It is very important that the President keep his word. Many things are happening in the United States and Europe. Nobody believes the US should withdraw troops right after the (December) election. You have got to have a slow movement. If you run away, it is a bad example."

Mr. Gray assured HBJ that "There is no question of that. It will be a conditions-based redeployment."

HBJ said, "We are training some of their people," meaning the Iraqis. He mentioned airport security in particular.

The meeting ended after approximately 45 minutes.
UNTERMEYER